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ABSTRACT

This bulletin is intended to help classroom teachers who have Indochinese refugee children in their classes. In many places where there is no English as a second language (ESL) program, it is the classroom teacher and auxiliary personnel who must teach the children English sentence patterns, pronunciation and vocabulary. When more than one teacher is involved in instructing the child, it is important that they keep each other informed in order to reinforce vocabulary or structure learning activities. They should also try to maintain an awareness of and sensitivity to the refugee child's background, recent experiences and the frustration he/she must be experiencing because of lack of English. With regard to methods and materials, they will find in this bulletin many suggestions for vocabulary and reading instruction, an annotated list of dictionaries, story books, flash cards and language development kits as well as suggestions for their use. Suggestions are also provided for classroom teachers who are solely responsible for instructing refugee children. These suggestions concern materials for teaching ESL, hints on class organization, a list of learning activities and sources of materials. (AMH)

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Indochinese Refugee Education Guides

#6

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION SERIES: Supplemental ESL Activities for Classroom Teachers

ED153498

The coming of the Indochinese refugee is not a totally new situation in the United States. For many teachers, it is nothing out of the ordinary to have non-English speaking children in their classrooms. For others, however, it is a new experience: while these teachers realize immediately that the biggest problem with these children is their lack of English, they have no idea how to solve that problem, i.e., teach the children English. Hopefully, this bulletin will give these inexperienced teachers some solutions, or at least suggestions.

In areas where there are large foreign populations, and therefore many non-English speaking children in the schools, the language problem is dealt with via ESL programs. (ESL is the acronym for English as a Second Language, an approach to English as though it were a foreign language -- which it is, to non-English speaking children.) In ESL programs, there are special classes, taught by trained ESL teachers, in which the sentence patterns of English are presented and drilled in much the same way that the sentence patterns of French or Spanish or German are taught in foreign language classes. Non-English speaking children attend these classes, as they would attend speech, remedial reading or remedial math classes, then go back to their regular classrooms for the rest of the day. Ideally, the ESL teacher and the classroom teacher work together, so that the language lessons are reinforced by, and reinforce, regular classroom work.

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Sometimes - depending on the number of children involved - the ESL teacher travels from school to school, and works in the classroom with her students; the classroom teacher then follows up with activities suggested by the ESL teacher.

The ESL teacher is specially trained in the theory and methodology of English as a Second Language. Teaching English to non-native speakers

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is a different proposition from teaching it to native speakers. Native speakers come to class already knowing how to combine English words into sentences that express what they want to say. The American first grader, for example, does not have to be taught how to move the auxiliary to the beginning of the sentence to form the question "Should I put my name on the paper?"; he already knows how to do this, because he is a native speaker of English. The non-native speaker, on the other hand, has to be shown how to form questions, and then has to be drilled so that he can quickly and correctly form questions of his own in English. The ESL teacher knows which sentence patterns have to be taught, and is aware that these must be sequenced so that the child can proceed from one to the other, building on what he already knows. The ESL teacher has also been trained in drilling techniques, and can conduct classes in which her students repeat sentences over and over, in meaningful contexts, until the pronunciation and structures involved are second nature.

Auxiliary School Personnel and the Teaching of English

In areas where there are not enough non-English speaking children to warrant an ESL program, those non-English speakers that do exist are often referred to auxiliary personnel for help. The speech therapist, the reading teacher, the DP teacher or the language arts specialist is expected, one way or another, to teach the children English. For understandable reasons, the specialist tends to interpret the problems of the non-English speaker in terms of her own speciality (the reading teacher, for example, might see the non-English speaker's problem as a reading problem, even though the child reads perfectly in his own language, and would transfer those skills immediately if he knew what the words and sentences meant!). Care should be taken on all sides to recognize the child's problem for what it is - the inability to speak English - and to remember that, for the most part, the child in his own language and culture is fully functioning and problem-free. There are, of course, refugee children with learning problems, but these problems are distinct from the overall language problem, and must not be confused with it.

Whoever it is that the child is going to for special help, it will be that person's responsibility to teach him the sentence patterns and pronunciation of English. The classroom teacher's responsibility will be to teach the child vocabulary, and to give him opportunities to use what he has learned

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in his language classes. The classroom teacher must also see that the child has ample opportunity to learn from his peers. (There are aspects of English that the non-English speaking child can learn only from his classmates: the English used by eight-year-old boys on the playground, for example, simply cannot be taught by the classroom teacher, because she doesn't speak it herself!)

Both the language teacher and the classroom teacher should try to maintain an awareness of and sensitivity to the refugee child's background, recent experiences and the frustration and anxiety he must be experiencing because of his lack of English. The trauma of evacuation and resettlement, and before that, the immediate horrors of war and possibly the loss of family, will color his reactions to situations and his progress in school. It is imperative that the classroom teacher and language teacher work closely so that together they can form a fairly complete picture of the child.

If the language teacher and classroom teacher keep each other informed of their activities with the child, they can reinforce each other's lessons. If the classroom teacher, for example, knows that the week's pronunciation lesson is on th, she can focus on vocabulary items with th in them when she is working with the child; or if she knows that the question form "What's this?" and the answer "It's a _____." are being taught, she can review vocabulary by asking the child "What's this?", pointing and requiring the child to answer "It's a _____." Conversely, if the language teacher has a list of vocabulary words the classroom teacher is working on, she can incorporate those words into her pronunciation and structure drills.

As we mentioned before, it is from the classroom teacher that the child will learn vocabulary. It is ultimately more beneficial for the child to be taught vocabulary items orally first, with the written forms taught later, or given as study aids. The child should be shown a cup, for example, and told "This is a cup" or "It's a cup"; he should repeat the word cup several times, both in isolation and in sentences, until he can pronounce it properly. Then he can be shown the written form of the word. (Older children who are literate in their native language will want the written form given to them at the same time as the spoken form, which is fine, as long as the teacher remembers that the spoken form is primary, and focuses on it in her presentation.)

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Materials in the Classroom

The teacher will probably want to teach the refugee child classroom vocabulary first: the words for things in the classroom like pencil, book, lunch money, teacher, desk, and so on. When these have been learned, she can use many of the materials which she already has in the classroom as sources of vocabulary. Here are some examples:

1. Picture dictionaries. The teacher can go through these with the child, (or have another child work with the refugee student,) looking at the pictures and pronouncing the associated words. Later, the child can make his own picture dictionaries, using pictures from magazines or old textbooks.
2. Flash cards and sentence strips with matching pictures. These can be used first in oral work with the teacher or another child; later, the child can work independently with them; matching words or sentences and pictures will reinforce the sentence patterns he has learned, as will copying the words and sentences.
3. Word puzzles and games. These can be used as sources of vocabulary and conversation.
4. DLM (Developmental Learning Materials). Any of the games, pictures, or puzzles designed to increase motor skills, awareness of body parts, or language development can be used as sources of vocabulary. Materials for activities (jump rope, etc.) can be utilized in teaching verbs like jump, clap, hop, and skip, (and, incidentally, verb tenses: Teacher asks, "What are you doing?"; child answers, "I'm jumping"; teacher asks, "What did you just do?"; child answers, "I just jumped", and so on.)
5. Richard Scarry's What Do People Do All Day, Best Word Book Ever, Great Big Schoolhouse, and Best Mother Goose Ever. These are useful because the pictures contain a wealth of material -- some of it quite sophisticated.
6. Peabody Language Development Kits. Although these are designed for children with learning problems, they are an excellent source of vocabulary and conversation with non-English speaking children. (The materials designed to help the native speaking slow learner with sequencing, for example, can be used with the bright non-English

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speaker, who will have no problem with the sequencing, but who needs practice talking in English about what happened first, second, and so on.)

7. "Talking books." Any materials, like Bill Martin Instant Readers, or the Bowmar Early Childhood Reading Series, in which stories are accompanied by tapes or records, can be used by the non-English speaking child, especially the child with a knowledge of the basic sentence patterns, as a source of vocabulary. They have the advantage of providing the child with a good oral model, but at the same time giving him something he can do by himself when the teacher and his classmates are busy with something he can't do yet.
8. Reading labs, programs like SRA or Readers' Digest Skill Builders are good sources of vocabulary (and general information!) for the child with some knowledge of English.

The examples listed above are meant to give the teacher an idea of the materials already in the classroom which can be used to teach vocabulary to refugee children. In fact, anything in the classroom that provides the children with an opportunity to talk about different objects and actions can be a source of vocabulary. If the teacher keeps in mind that the child should be able to say something before he reads it, and if she stays away from materials which teach phonics (for reasons which will be discussed later), anything she can think up will be beneficial.

Teaching of Reading to Non-English Speaking Children

The classroom teacher might also be called upon to teach reading to the refugee child, especially in the early grades where reading is the prime concern. Actually, reading is not that great a problem to the refugee child if he is literate in his own language, and his own language has a Roman alphabet. The Vietnamese third-grader, for example, will be able almost immediately to decode English words, because, by and large, the letters of the English alphabet symbolize the same sounds they symbolize in the Vietnamese language; his comprehension of what he has read will go hand in hand with his knowledge of the sentence patterns of English. In other words, basic reading skills transfer readily from language to language. Even children who do not know the Roman alphabet will not have to be taught reading skills, although they will need to be shown the shapes of letters and the sounds they represent.

The kindergartener or first grader who does not yet read will, of course, have to be taught how. In this case, the teacher should rely on readiness activities and building sight-word vocabulary. Until the child has a good understanding of the sound system of English (in other words, until his English pronunciation is quite good) phonics will confuse and frustrate him. English has a different sound system from Vietnamese or Khmer (the language spoken in Cambodia): the child will hear English sounds in terms of his native sound system, and so, for example, will hear they the same as day, and so on. Being told, then, that th sounds different from d will confuse him, because as far as he is concerned they sound exactly the same. Conversely, being told that the word tat has the same sound at both the beginning and the end will confuse him, because to him they are quite different. Until he learns which sounds are the same and which are different to speakers of English, he simply will not understand what the teacher is talking about, no matter how much drill he is given.

The best ways to handle the teaching of reading are the sight-word approach and language-experience method. The sight-word approach builds on the child's basic vocabulary and moves from one-word recognition into complete sentence recognition. From there he usually proceeds to a reading series - basal, programmed or individualized (using library books, textbooks, reference books or magazines). A basal or programmed series will usually provide the teacher with sequenced follow-up activities in development of necessary skills like punctuation, comprehension, and vocabulary. The majority of the texts will be illustrated.

The language-experience method of teaching reading is the most individualized possible, because the child provides the material. Initially it emphasizes listening and speaking; later reading and writing are included.

The child usually dictates a story, or a few sentences, on a topic of particular interest to him. From there the teacher works on vocabulary and the development of basic skills. The older child will be able to write his own stories. Even though he can write, he will need the teacher's help with skill and vocabulary development. The student's vocabulary building can be maintained through the use of "word banks," in which the words recognized and remembered from the stories are written on small index cards and either kept in a file box or a cigar box. After gathering a small number, they can be alphabetized for easy reference.

A few points to remember about reading:

1. The child will want to be in a reading group especially if most of the other children are.
2. If there are only one or two refugee children in a reading group, they should initially be allowed to float between the two best reading groups in the class. These groups will be the best models.

Materials for Teaching ESL

There is a slim possibility that there will be neither an ESL teacher nor any other language teacher available and the job of teaching English to the refugee child will rest entirely with the classroom teacher. The teacher should find out about the child's language, cultural background, educational experience, and his English proficiency if there is any. She should organize the children (or child) as she would for a reading group, but in this case it will be an ESL group. She will need an ESL textbook, and there are many to choose from. Most of them provide texts, workbooks, charts, records, tests to evaluate progress and very detailed and easy-to-follow teachers' guides. For example, the teachers' guide to English Around the World gives detailed instructions for each lesson with step-by-step directions for introducing vocabulary and sentence structure and a variety of follow-up activities. The majority of the teachers' guides in ESL books are written for teachers who have had very little or no ESL experience. For further discussion of ESL instruction, the teacher can refer to the National Indochinese Clearinghouse's General Information Series #4, #5, #6 and #11. A selected list of ESL materials is contained in A Selected Annotated Bibliography for Teaching English to Speakers of Vietnamese (Center for Applied Linguistics) and General Information Series #12.

Suggestions for the Classroom Teacher

1. Encourage your students to speak.
2. Avoid material or activities which may be too difficult and therefore frustrating.
3. Speak to your students in a natural way -- contractions, normal rate, tone and pitch. Use simple language -- short sentences, familiar structures, and concrete vocabulary.
4. Emphasize listening and speaking activities, plays, puppet shows, dramatics, role playing, public speaking, debating.

5. Provide a variety of listening activities: poetry readings, singing, talking books, filmstrip with records and tapes, taped material.
6. Provide the student with talking activities as often as possible: telephone conversations (can usually borrow a system from the phone company), give oral reports on field trips, provide structured situations for talking. For instance, make a map of community and surrounding areas. Have the student work out his route to and from school, and discuss stores, buildings, etc. on the route.
7. Give simple directions -- one and two steps initially; even better, use an example.
8. Don't be afraid to correct; make corrections short and immediate.
9. Teach the student to read and write only what he can say and understand.
10. Use a variety of visual aids: chalkboard, charts, pictures, maps, diagrams, movies, filmstrips.

References

General Classroom Materials:

Bill Martin Instant Readers
Holt Rinehart & Winston, Inc.
383 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

DETECT Series
Science Research Associates, Inc.
259 East Erie Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

DLM
Developmental Learning Materials
7440 Natchez Avenue
Niles, Illinois 60648

Early Childhood Reading Series
Bowmar Publishing Corporation
P. O. Box 3623
622 Rodier Drive
Glendale, California 91201

Language Experiences in Reading
Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation
425 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Peabody Language Kit
American Guidance Service, Inc.
Circle Pines,
Minnesota 55014

Reading Incentive Language Program
Bowmar Publishing Corporation
P. O. Box 3623
622 Rodier Drive
Glendale, California 91201

Skill Builders
Readers Digest
Pleasantville, New York 10570

Sounds and Patterns of Language - Talking Our Way to Reading Series
Holt Rinehart & Winston, Inc.
383 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

SRA Reading Labs
Science Research Associates, Inc.
259 East Erie Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Transparencies & Duplicating Masters for Language and Vocabulary Development
Milliken Publishing Company
1100 Research Blvd.
St. Louis, Missouri 63132
or
Continental Press
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania 17022

TRY: Experiences for Young Children
Noble and Noble Publishers, Inc.
1 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Background Readings:

The classroom teacher will find the following basic background and curriculum information on English as a Second Language very useful:

English as a Second Language: From Theory to Practice, by Mary Finocchiaro.
Regents Publishing Company
2 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Foundations for Teaching English as a Second Language: Theory and Method for Multicultural Education, by Muriel Saville-Troike
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

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A Handbook for Teachers of Vietnamese Students: Hints for Dealing with Cultural Differences in Schools
Center for Applied Linguistics
1611 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Helping People Learn English, by Earl W. Stevick
Abingdon Press
201 Eighth Avenue South
Nashville, Tennessee 37202

Selected List of Instructional Materials for English as a Second Language - Elementary Level, by Maybelle Marckwardt
Center for Applied Linguistics
1611 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Suggested Activities for Non-English Speaking Children: An Approach to Curriculum Development Involving Bilingual Community Writers
Board of Education
Department of Curriculum
228 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

A Selected Annotated Bibliography for Teaching English to Speakers of Vietnamese
Center for Applied Linguistics
1611 North Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Teaching Reading to Non-English Speakers, by Eleanor Thonis
Collier Macmillan International, Inc.
866 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Selected ESL Textbooks for Children

CORE English: English for Speakers of Other Languages
Ginn and Company
191 Spring Street
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173

English Around the World
Scott Foresman
1900 East Lake Avenue
Glenview, Illinois 60075

Miami Linguistic Readers
D. C. Heath
125 Spring Street
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173

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The New Way to Learn English -- We Speak English
American Book Company
Litton Educational Publishing Company, Inc.
Litton Industries
450 West 33rd Street
New York, New York 10001

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